

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4946
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
EMBASSY PARIS 9418
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY BERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1920

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, WB
SUBJECT: WRIGHT-ABRASIMOV AMBASSADORIAL LUNCHEON JULY 19

FOLLOWING IS BRITISH REPORT ON LUNCHEON GIVEN BY
BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRG SIR OLIVER WRIGHT FOR SOVIET
AMBASSADOR TO GDR ABRASIMOV ON JULY 19. BEGIN TEXT:

1. SIR OLIVER WRIGHT GAVE THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR
LUNCH ON 19 JULY. ABRASIMOV WAS IN A
FRIENDLY MOOD AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING SHORT OF ATTACKING
MATERIAL. HE DID NOT (NOT) MENTION SUCH HARDY ANNUALS AS DIRECT
ELECTIONS, TIES WITH THE FRG, VISITS OF FEDERAL MINISTERS, ETC.

2. HIS ONLY CRITICISM OF FEDERAL GERMAN BEHAVIOUR OVER BERLIN
CONCERNED THE RECENT STATEMENT BY STATE-SECRETARY BAUM THAT BERLIN
IS A LAND OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. ABRASIMOV MAINTAINED THAT AN
OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THIS KIND REPRESENTED A THREAT TO THE
QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT AND TO DETENTE AND HE CRITICISED THE
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ALLIES FOR THEIR FAILURE TO CORRECT IT. SIR OLIVER WRIGHT
REMINDS HIM THAT THE FEDERAL GERMAN CONSTITUTION
DESCRIBES BERLIN AS A LAND OF THE FRG
BUT THAT THIS PROVISION HAD NOT BEEN APPLIED BY THE ALLIES TO BERLIN.
THE ALLIES STOOD BY THE PROVISION IN THE QA THAT BERLIN(NEXT WORD
UNDERLINED) CONTINUED NOT TO BE A CONSTITUENT PART OF THE FRG NOR
TO BE GOVERNED BY IT.

3. ABRASIMOV THEN RAISED TWO RECENT ATTACKS ON SOVIET OFFICES IN WEST BERLIN. EARLIER THIS MONTH NAZIS HAD COVERED THE NOVOSTI OFFICE WITH SWASTIKAS AND SLOGANS CALLING FOR A UNITED GERMANY. IN FEBRUARY A SIMILAR GROUP OF FASCISTS HAD DONE CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO THE AEROFLOT OFFICE. IN THE LATTER CASE THE BRITISH, IN WHOSE SECTOR IT LAY, HAD FAILED TO CATCH THE PERPETRATORS OR PROVIDE COMPENSATION. SIR OLIVER WRIGHT REPLIED THAT WE TOOK OUR SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES VERY SERIOUSLY. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE AEROFLOT INCIDENT WE HAD PROVIDED PROTECTION FOR ALL SOVIET OFFICES AND HAD INSTITUTED A SEARCH FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE. THERE WAS NO LEGAL CASE FOR COMPENSATION SINCE AEROFLOT WAS A COMMERCIAL ORGANISATION (SEE BMG TELS 46 AND 73). ABRASIMOV APPEALED TO SIR OLIVER PERSONALLY TO RECONSIDER THE CASE FOR COMPENSATION.

4. SIR OLIVER WRIGHT RAISED THE PROBLEM OF AIR SAFETY, INSTANCING RECENT NEAR MISSES AND POINTING TO THE PROBLEM OF THE CONFLICTING FLIGHT PATHS OF BERLIN S TEGEL AIRPORT AND THE SOVIET MILITARY BASE AT WERNEUCHEN. HE REMINDED ABRASIMOV THAT ALTHOUGH WE NOTIFIED EVERY WESTERN FLIGHT TO THE RUSSIANS, THEY NEVER TOLD US ABOUT THEIRS. PERHAPS WE COULD DEVISE A MECHANISM FOR REPORTING SOVIET AIR MOVEMENTS ? ABRASIMOV CONFIRMED THAT HE SHARED OUR INTEREST IN FLIGHT SAFETY, BUT SOMEWHAT MISUNDERSTANDING OUR POINT, SAID THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF THE RUSSIANS SEEKING WESTERN PERMISSION FOR SOVIET FLIGHTS. HE DISMISSED THE 18 JUNE NEAR MISS (BMG TEL NO 148) AS AN OVER-REACTION BY A NERVOUS BRITISH AIRWAYS
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PILOT. IF ALL WESTERN FLIGHTS WERE CORRECTLY REPORTED IN THE BERLIN AIR SAFETY CENTRE AND ALLIED PILOTS KEPT TO THE NOTIFIED ALTITUDE NO NEAR MISSES COULD ARISE.

5. ABRASIMOV THEN LAUNCHED INTO AN ATTACK ON FLAG TOURS, LEAVING BEHIND AN ILLUSTRATED DOSSIER OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS BY BRITISH VEHICLES. HE MAINTAINED THAT BRITISH FLAG TOURS WERE CONTINUING TO DRIVE DANGEROUSLY (A GDR CITIZEN HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY INJURED IN A RECENT ACCIDENT) AND TO VISIT RESTRICTED AREAS NEAR GDR AND SOVIET INSTALLATIONS. THE HABIT OF PATROLLING WAS A BAD ONE WITHOUT ANY DOCUMENTARY BASIS AND THE BEST SOLUTION WAS TO END THE PRACTICE. BUT FOR THE PRESENT, PATROLS SHOULD AT LEAST OBEY THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

6. SIR OLIVER WRIGHT SAID THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD NOT AGREE TO CEASE SENDING FLAG TOURS WHICH WERE IN EXERCISE OF OUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. OUR TOURS OBEYED NORMAL TRAFFIC RULES AND HAD EVERY INTEREST IN AVOIDING ACCIDENTS. ABRASIMOV SHOULD HOWEVER BE AWARE THAT THE BEHAVIOUR OF SOVIET MILITARY VEHICLES IN WEST BERLIN WAS FAR FROM PERFECT. THEY HAD BEEN OBSERVED VIOLATING LOCAL TRAFFIC REGULATIONS AND WE HOPED THAT THEY WOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO OBEY THE RULES IN FUTURE. ABRASIMOV REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT SUCH VIOLATIONS HAD

EVER OCCURRED. HE ADDED GRATUITOUSLY THAT IF THE ALLIES WERE TO HAND OVER ALL THEIR RIGHTS TO THE SENATE THE RUSSIANS WOULD BE ABLE TO CEASE THEIR PATROLS.

7. COMMENT:

(A) AEROFLOT. WE WILL TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CASE FOR COMPENSATION BUT IT IS NOT AN EASY ONE TO CONCEDE.

(B) AIR SAFETY. THOUGH UNRECEPTIVE TO SIR OLIVER WRIGHT S ARGUMENT WE SUSPECT THAT ABRASIMOV MAY NOW PROVIDE THE NECESSARY POLITICAL PUSH TO ENABLE PROGRESS TO BE MADE AT A TECHNICAL LEVEL IN THE BASC.

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(C) FLAG TOURS. ABRASIMOV'S COMPLAINTS WERE ROUTINE AND OFTEN INACCURATE (THE INJURY TO THE GDR CITIZEN WAS CAUSED BY A BRITISH CAR ON A RECREATIONAL VISIT AND NOT BY A FLAG TOUR). THE DOSSIER IS PROBABLY BEST IGNORED. END TEXT.
GEORGE

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